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A War of Implicit Forces: The Algerian Revolution

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Currently, in their eighth month of protests, all protesting Algerians have one goal in mind: electing an actual president, not a figurehead. Today, Algeria's political power remains consolidated in a group of army leaders. Even with the promise of democratic elections, Algerians refuse to cease protesting until the military-led regime ends.¹ Algeria's current issue continues as an extension of its tumultuous relationship with other military powers. Such instability can be traced back to Algeria's fight for independence: Algerian independence relied heavily upon the leadership of a political group that holds strong influence over the current government. Coming under the French army's control in 1830, Algeria rapidly became first a French colony, then a part of France itself.² Since then, Algerians have made various attempts at rebellions against the French government which did little to contribute to their struggle for independence. With the prolonged duration of France's colonial control over Algeria, the demographic makeup of Algeria consisted of two groups: the native Algerians consisting of Muslim Arabs and Berbers, and the *pieds-noirs*.³ The non-homologous makeup of Algeria made it increasingly difficult for native Algerians to gain freedom: *pieds-noirs* held most of the power in the Algerian faction of the French government and society.⁴ The tide began to turn around the start of the war in 1954 with Muslim Algerians forming and joining nationalist groups like the F.L.N.⁵ After years of fighting, Charles de Gaulle opened up negotiations with the predominant

¹ Fransisco Serrano, "After 8 Months on the Streets, Protestors in Algeria Aren't Giving Up," *Foreign Policy*, last modified October 3, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/03/after-eight-months-on-the-streets-protesters-in-algeria-arent-giving-up/>

²John P Entelis, *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 23-27

³ *Pieds-Noirs* were the white, French Algerians often related to the *colons* who settled in Algeria earlier.

⁴Entelis, *Algeria*, 27

⁵Front of National Liberation

nationalist group, the F.L.N., eventually leading to the liberation of Algeria in March of 1962.⁶ Such liberation was determined by the Évian Accords.⁷ France's response to Algeria's uprising led to domestic criticism of France's role in Algeria and led to international sympathy for Algeria's cause. Algeria's success in gaining independence was dependent on a multitude of factors, but most significantly upon the Algerian Muslims' ability to not only ideologically separate themselves from *pieds-noirs*, but also their ability to gain domestic and international sympathy, including support from other African countries and the United States. This, in turn, put pressure on the French government, leading to the Évian Accords.

Algeria came to be under French colonial rule for 132 years due to an argument between a French official and the Dey of Regency, the ruler of the land that came to be Algeria. On the day of April 29, 1827 the Dey and a French consul met in Algiers. Both were trying to resolve trade deal issues, but the French side remained indifferent to the Dey's numerous attempts to solve the debt problem. As a result, the Dey grew frustrated, and tapped the consul's shoulder with a fly whisk as a signal to terminate the meeting.⁸ The consul took such action as an insult to the honor of France. As such, Charles X, the ruler of France at the time, demanded that the Turkish ruler in Algiers fly the French flag over Algiers and that France should be given a one-hundred-gun salute.⁹ With the Dey refusing to cede to France on such demands, France placed a blockade on Algerian ports. Such action held little power to change the Dey's mind. However, France succeeded in gaining revenge when on June 14, 1830, Sidi Ferruch, a town 21km away

⁶ Entelis, *Algeria*, 56

⁷ "France-Algeria Independence Agreements (Évian Agreements)," *International Legal Materials* 1, no. 2(Cambridge University Press, October 1962): 214, <https://jstor.org/stable/20689578>

⁸ Entelis, *Algeria*, 23

⁹ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1977), 40.

from Algiers was invaded by some 37,607 French soldiers.¹⁰ Three weeks later, the French soldiers captured the city of Algiers, signaling the start of French colonization in Algeria.¹¹

The unplanned victory on the part of France led to the formation of governmental structures intended to benefit France and French citizens. A governor-general held civil and military jurisdiction over Algeria, which was formally annexed as a colony of France in 1834. The French military established *bureaux arabes*, departments intended to take care of Muslim affairs. With the rise of the French Second Republic in 1848, three *départements* were formed for the territorial areas of Algiers, Oran, and Constantine. These *départements* were under the rule of the civilian government, marking Algeria no longer a colony, but an extension of mainland France. Such changes paired with other arrangements, separated the French Algerian population into two groups: the privileged *pieds-noirs* and the oppressed Arabs and Berbers alike.¹²

Various orders and edicts effectively dismembered the previous culture of Muslims in the area while suppressing the current population. By the 1840s, France had confiscated many tribal and communal lands, pushing native Muslims away from the fertile land.¹³ An 1863 statute privatized communally held land, which harmed the tribal economy by undermining the authority and power of the tribe.¹⁴ Following in 1865, a decree was made by France, intending to give Muslims an equal position to the *pieds-noirs* by giving Muslims the title of French subjects,

¹⁰ Entelis, *Algeria*, 23

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, 25-9

¹³ Adu Boahen, *General History of Africa: Africa Under Colonial Domination 1880-1935* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1985), 422

¹⁴ Entelis, *Algeria*, 29

but not French citizens.¹⁵ Subjects were able to enter the civil service, serve in the army, and migrate, but had less political influence than citizens. In order to become a citizen, they would have to renounce their personal status and allegiance to Islamic law. As such, many Muslim Algerians refused to become citizens as they would have to forfeit their religion for it.¹⁶ This decree created subsequent barriers in both the political and civil spheres for all Algerians. Consequently, many native Algerians saw no need to obtain complete liberation from France, but rather preferred to assimilate and gain other rights in a peaceful manner.¹⁷ On the other hand, native Algerians who desired sovereignty turned to creating nationalist groups.

The F.L.N. was formed in 1954 and had an armed wing called the National Liberation Army or A.L.N.¹⁸ By 1956, nearly all previous Algerian leaders and intellectuals belonged to this nationalist group.¹⁹ The F.L.N. became the central nationalist group, forcing all other political parties to merge under the F.L.N. and give up their status as nationalist groups.²⁰ Such action removed many moderate nationalist groups from Algeria.²¹ The F.L.N. used a variety of military and political tactics, from guerrilla warfare to the F.L.N.'s use of terrorism against Algerian citizens.²² Even from afar, those in mainland France were influenced by the war.

¹⁵ Ibid., 30-1

¹⁶ Ibid., 30-1.

¹⁷ Nevill Barbour, "Variations of Arab National Feeling in French North Africa," *Middle East Journal* 8, no. 3 (1954): 311, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4322615>

¹⁸ Yahia Zoubir, "From Anticolonial Liberation Movement to Ruling Party," *National Liberation Movements as Government in Africa* (London: Routledge 2016): 90, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/10.4324/9781315101361>

¹⁹ Nevill Barbour, "Change of Scene in Algeria," *The World Today* 16, no. 8 (Aug 1960): 356, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40393250>

²⁰ Zoubir, 91.

²¹ Alfred Sherman, "Climax in Algeria: The O.A.S. and the Pieds Noirs," *The World Today* 18, no. 4 (April 1962): 138.

²² Entelis, 52

With domestic disenchantment with the situation in Algeria, apprehension arose surrounding a potential uprising of settlers and the French military, who were angered by resentment expressed in the public opinion of those in mainland France. Those in mainland France, upon hearing of repeated torture against the Muslim population, were unhappy with French in Algeria who still desired to win the war.²³ This apprehension led to the election of Charles de Gaulle, who in an effort to resolve the conflict, offered up enfranchising the Algerians. Such offer angered the *pieds-noirs* and did little to appease the F.L.N.'s call for sovereignty.²⁴ In response, a provisional government called the GPRA²⁵ was formed. De Gaulle, under immense pressure, caved to the F.L.N. and began negotiations with them in 1960, which was followed by the mutual approval of a referendum on independence by the French and Muslim population in early 1961. Finally, in 1962, the Évian Accords were signed, indicating the end of France's rule over Algeria.²⁶ Such accords "recognized the right of the Algerians to choose [...] their political destiny in relations to the French Republic."²⁷ All those living in Algeria were given a three year period in which they could determine what citizenship they desired.²⁸

The formation of the F.L.N. and the subsequent dominance they exerted over all other nationalist groups, led to a more unified fight for freedom while ensuring a clear split between

²³ Kenneth Perkins, "North Africa From the First World War" chapter 15 in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. Francis Robinson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 433-4, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521838269.017>

²⁴ Perkins, "North Africa," 434

²⁵ Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne

²⁶ Perkins, 434-5

²⁷ "France-Algeria Independence," 214

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 217

pieds-noirs and Native Algerians. In an observation of nationalist feelings through his time in French Africa, Neville Barbour observed, “the conception of an Algerian nation [...] [was] not easily arrived at, particularly as a century of French rule has destroyed such symbols of native sovereignty as previously existed.”²⁹ For any liberation movement to succeed, a thirst for sovereignty must be present. With symbols of native sovereignty erased, those native Algerians who desired complete separation from France had no unified manner of expressing their hope of liberation. The creation of the F.L.N. provided such ideological organization to Algerians. The F.L.N.’s use of threats of violence and executions against Muslims to bring about financial support hints at the F.L.N.’s methods by which the F.L.N. exerted dominance over other nationalist groups.³⁰ With the hegemony the F.L.N. created, they provided an unified representation of hope of native sovereignty. Dually, the hegemony of the F.L.N. removed some uncertainty about the future government of a newly liberated Algeria. With one sole nationalist group, the Algerian fight for liberation was unified under one name, reducing the possibility of inter-conflict between Algerians desiring liberation. Such unification created a stronger system to fight for independence.

Terrorist and guerrilla tactics not only drew attention to the F.L.N., but also led to many Muslims supporting the F.L.N.. David Galula, a Lieutenant Colonel who commanded French troops in the Algerian War, observed the F.L.N.’s tactics, saying, “a grenade or bomb in a café would produce far more noise than an obscure ambush against French soldiers in the Ouarsenis Mountains.”³¹ Instead of the F.L.N. focusing efforts on ambushing the French soldiers in an

²⁹ Neville Barbour, “Variations,” 311

³⁰ Barbour, “Change,” 356

³¹David, Galula *Pacification in Algeria*, (RAND, 1963): 61

geographically strategic location, the F.L.N. used less manpower through terrorist tactics to create chaos within a more densely populated area. The Battle of Algiers was a prime example of such tactic; the use of “no more than five hundred” F.L.N. supporters contributed to the paralysis of a city of 700,000 and led to the enactment of the Special Power’s Act, which provided General Massu the authority to address such terrorism.³² Massu’s leadership later became a point of contention within the French community.³³ By focusing on creating conflict in populated areas instead of rural areas, the F.L.N. exacerbated the consequences of conflict in order to gain domestic and international attention. Additionally, as Galula observed, the attacks targeting the *pieds-noirs* instead of targeting the French army, led to “blind reactions” against Algerian Muslims by the *pieds-noirs*.³⁴ Now instead of the French citizens simply oppressing Algerians through systems, the French citizens now physically harmed Algerians as well. Such reactions pushed Algerians to support the F.L.N. in spite of the F.L.N.’s questionable methods of achieving liberation. Those native Algerians who had once hoped to assimilate now were forced to demand sovereignty as well. Ferhat Abbas, who eventually joined the F.L.N. and acted as first president of the independent Algeria at one point said, “We are Frenchmen with the personal status of Muslims.”³⁵ His transition from assimilationist to leader within a nationalist group fighting for independence indicated the necessity of unification for France to appropriately recognize Algerian Muslims. With the hegemony of the F.L.N., Muslims had very few other nationalist or religious groups to turn to. In avoiding military strategies, the F.L.N.’s tactics sought to create

³² Ibid., 142-3

³³ Catharine Savage Brosman, "Torture and Terrorism: Jules Roy Answers General Massu." *The French Review* 59, no. 5 (1986): 723. www.jstor.org/stable/394281.

³⁴ Galula, 61

³⁵ Neville Barbour, “Variations,” 311

ideological divide between the Muslim Algerians and *pieds-noirs* and to draw outside attention to their cause. The F.L.N. ultimately unified oppressed Algerians under one united front with the common goal of independence. With the F.L.N. using a system of cells to recruit and carry out attacks on urban and rural areas, the French army responded in violent and unethical ways. French figures like General Massu turned to the use of torture interrogation methods to determine the plans of the nationalist organization.³⁶

The use of controversial methods to subdue the F.L.N. and awareness of such methods caused domestic scorn for France's actions in Algeria. Within the police force in Algeria, the secretary-general of the police from 1956 to 1958, Paul Teitgen, responded to questions about the torture of people under arrest, testifying, "It was because of that that I gave up my post."³⁷ The resignation of any high ranked official provokes questions, but even more noteworthy was Teitgen's explicitness in revealing his reason for resigning. His openness in the justification for his resignation demonstrated that even those with the presumed jobs of silencing the Algerian nationalists were opposed to the means used to achieve the intended goal. While Teitgen never explicitly stated his support for the Algerian cause, his words undercut the French government's moral justification in the opposition of Algeria's fight for freedom. His reaction provided further support to French individuals conflicted over France's continued efforts in maintaining control over Algeria. Likewise, within the French army, soldiers began deserting their posts, leading to outrage and support. One form of support came through a manifesto, signed by 142 French

³⁶ Chester Obuchowski, "Algeria: The Tortured Conscience," in *The French Review*, 42, no. 1 (1968): 93, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/386217>

³⁷ Own correspondence, "M. Teitgan Speaks at F.L.N. Trial," *The Times* (London, England), September 19, 1960, The Times Digital Archive, <http://tinyurl.gale.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/tinyurl/CG84n5>

intellectuals, including the French actress, Danielle Delorme.³⁸ This support furthered the French public's questioning of the moral authority of France ruling Algeria. The very purpose of a manifesto is to draw awareness to a group or individual's explicit views. Manifestos carry inherently political implications. Thus, such a manifesto carried political criticism of the French government. Through the support of significant French figures such as Delorme, the outcry against the French government's actions arguably became a more mainstream stance to take. Such stance allowed for the expansion of criticism to come from not only those directly involved in Algeria, but the general public as well.

With the continued outrage against France's actions, the youth's outrage spurred concern about the ideological divide forming within the French nation. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, a intellectual who signed the manifesto that demanded the French government respect the conscientious objection of French soldiers, observed that the National Association of French Students, a union, "representing more than 100,000 students was prepared to state publicly that the solidarity of the nation was threatened by torture being an essential element in the war."³⁹ With the youth of France clearly expressing dissatisfaction with France, the French government ran the risk of a generational divide between the younger generations and older generations. Youth often carry the passion necessary for political protests that disrupt the normalcy within society. Thus, French youth's questioning of the authority of the government weakened the stability of the nation and contributed to the division of the French public. The stability of France weakened not only domestically, but also internationally.

³⁸ Own correspondence, "F.L.N. Trial Arouses French Opinion" *The Times* (London, England), September 28, 1960. The Times Digital Archive, <http://tinyurl.gale.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/tinyurl/CGAT28>.

³⁹ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Torture: Cancer of Democracy* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), 148.

In an international context, some French intellectuals expressed concern over such controversial tactics. In the aftermath of the Algerian War, Pierre Vidal-Naquet worried about the torturers being granted amnesty, as such amnesty made “nonsense” of the International Declaration on Human Rights, and the Nuremberg Trials. Additionally he observed, “ By International Law, any country is entitled to punish a crime against humanity.”⁴⁰ While Vidal-Naquet referred to the amnesty granted at the end of the war inciting potential extrajudicial prosecution, such prosecution against France could have been pursued before the end of the war. France’s role in Algeria became questionable when the French army and the police employed unethical means to break up the Algerian Revolution. By undermining human rights documents, France undermined its own moral standing. Especially in this time surrounding the start of the Cold War and the end of WWII, the Allies were in a ideological struggle with Communist nations. This ideological fight manifested through each nation attempting to exert their moral superiority over one another. The very formation of the UDHR,⁴¹ through a Commission ran by Eleanor Roosevelt, carried twinges of conflict between the U.S.S.R. representative and other representatives.⁴² So when France used tactics that infringed upon the rights of others and violated the UDHR, France weakened its position in the international community by opening up the opportunity for other nations to exert dominance over France through the legal prosecution of French torturers. This highlighted France’s inability to uphold the democratic tenant of justice within its own jurisdiction. France inadvertently placed itself in a vulnerable position as the use

⁴⁰ Ibid., 165

⁴¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights

⁴² Eleanor Roosevelt, "The Promise of Human Rights," *Foreign Affairs* 26, no. 3 (1948): 470, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20030126>

of torture in Algeria severely undermined the morality of France, and thus, threatened the very democracy of France.

Through the clear cut demands of the F.L.N. for democratic freedom, the Algerian cause gained international sympathy from countries invested in freedom from colonial rule, as well as those invested in democracy. Such sympathy led to support for the Algerian movement through putting pressure on France, which pushed Charles de Gaulle towards reaching an agreement with the F.L.N. Various delegations and individuals brought the situation in Algeria to the UN's attention such as the Syrian delegation led by Muhammad ed-Farra.⁴³ In the 11th Assembly of the General Assembly, the UN made a resolution encouraging cooperation between France and Algeria in the spirit of democracy.⁴⁴ By bringing awareness to an international stage, the conflict in Algeria became an worldwide issue, especially within context of the Cold War, where the ideologies of communism and democracy clashed on the worldwide stage. This exposed the situation in Algeria to the influence of other nations' stances and subsequent policies.

African countries supported Algeria's fight for independence, as many experienced similar foreign dominance. Tunisia's president, Habib Bourguiba, went so far as to ask U.S. president Eisenhower to encourage de Gaulle to consider "more reliable guarantees of self-determination" for Algeria.⁴⁵ By using his political sway to publicly encourage the president of a highly influential nation to support Algeria, Bourguiba spurred political discourse about other democratic nations' duty to support democracy internationally. Nine independent African States

⁴³ Muhammad El-Farra, "The Algerian Tragedy." *Africa Today* 3, no. 4 (1956): 7-9, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4183818>

⁴⁴ General Assembly Resolution 1012, *Question of Algeria*, A/RES/1012 (15 February 1957), United Nations, [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/1012\(XI\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/1012(XI))

⁴⁵ Own correspondence, "Mr. Bourguiba's Algerian War Appeal to Mr. Eisenhower," *The Times* (London, England), December 18, 1959, The Times Digital Archive, <http://tinyurl.gale.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/tinyurl/CNQC8>

met with the intention to discuss how to recognize the GPRA⁴⁶ at the Monrovia Conference. At this conference, the nations urged NATO to encourage France to stop using NATO resources in Algeria.⁴⁷ By encouraging NATO, a group formed in response to the spread of communism, such international sympathy continued to elevate the Algerian War from a simple domestic crisis to an international crisis that could very well influence the spread of democracy. Such crises led to the attention of powerful democracies.

The United States, a major power of NATO, placed economic pressure on France to lessen their influence over Algeria. In January 1958, when French diplomat Jean Monnet attempted to get loans for his nation, he had to sign an agreement, declaring that France would “demobilize 150,000 troops that had been raised for the Algerian War.”⁴⁸ As Matthew Connelly alluded to, while U.S. leaders were more likely concerned about the F.L.N. turning to support from communist states like the U.S.S.R., rather than being concerned about France threatening the future of a new democracy, such an agreement placed France in a compromising situation.⁴⁹ Charles de Gaulle placed France’s economy at risk with the continued war efforts while its social and political scene continued to be filled with strife and tension. With both of these spheres being threatened, the decision of Charles de Gaulle to create a referendum for the liberation of Algeria through the Évian Accords seemed more like a reasonable solution to a multitude of issues

⁴⁶ Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Algérienne

⁴⁷ “Special Conferences,” *International Organization* 16 no. 2 (University of Wisconsin Press 1962): 446, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2705400>

⁴⁸ Wall, «The U.S., 502; Robert Anderson to DDE, 1/25/58, EOF 1953-1961, Part 2: International Series. UPA, reel 7, frames 793-798 ; «Memorandum», 1/11/58, MAE, DE-CE, vol. 331, Aide américaine. 1958-60.

⁴⁹ Matthew Connelly, “The French-American Conflict over North America and the Fall of the Fourth Republic,” *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* 84 no. 315 (1997): 9-27, https://www.persee.fr/doc/outre_0300-9513_1997_num_84_315_3537

including, but not limited to the divided *pieds-noirs* and the Muslim Algerians, the questionable ethicality of France's actions in Algeria, and France's unstable economy.

Some French, particularly the *pieds-noirs*, saw the Muslim Algerian's fight for an independent Algeria as unwarranted. Both *pieds-noirs* and extremist nationalists opposed various reforms implemented to aid Muslim Algerians for two very different reasons. Extreme nationalists boycotted these reforms because these reforms created a stronger tie between France and Algeria.⁵⁰ Arguably, if France was indeed attempting to provide more rights to Muslim Algerians instead of continuing to oppress them, then Algerians desiring freedom from France had little motivation for opposing France. However, such assumption overlooks the context of France's rule over Algeria. After 120 years, native Algerians still did not have equal rights in comparison to the *pieds-noirs*, in spite of reforms and citizenship, the largely Muslim, native Algerian population would still have to renounce their religion. If France failed to create a equitable state in Algeria, even after 120 years, nationalists who desired secession had an understandable reason for mistrusting the ability of reforms to emend the divide between the *pieds-noirs* and native Algerians.

In attempting to determine the reasons as to how Algeria won the Algerian War, the large majority of primary sources in English observed the situation in an international light, and often overlooked how the situation was viewed within France and Algeria. Work written in France or Algeria often came from French-born observers, and thus, failed to encapsulate the stances of native Algerians. Finding a source that came from a Muslim Algerian would have been beneficial in better comprehending the situation from a different perspective. As such, the nuanced structure

⁵⁰ Sherman, 138

of Algerian society before the Algerian War could not be fully explored in detail within this paper.

Ultimately, the victory of Algeria in the Algerian War cannot be credited to a single explicit reason, but rather various implicit forces. While technically ended by Charles de Gaulle's decision to hold a referendum on the issue, Charles de Gaulle's desire to or ability to hold a referendum depended on a large variety of factors. The war, following the referendum, was democratically ended with the Évian Accords. The most prominent factors in encouraging the end of the war were the F.L.N.'s ability to unify Muslim Algerians, the domestic outcry from mainland France incited by the use of torture, and international support. The Algerian War serves as a model for war against colonial rule that ultimately succeeds not by military victories, but through democratic means.

While Algeria still faces consequences of the Algerian War, from the lack of multiparty systems until 1989, to the influence that Algeria's military leaders continue to hold over Algeria's democracy, Algerians still possess the same desire for self-determination that they demonstrated in the Algerian War.⁵¹ In desiring free and fair elections, demonstrators are currently calling for the cancellation of the upcoming December elections, which would only continue the tyrant-like rule of military leaders.⁵² While Algerian demonstrators are now seeking liberation from the oppression caused by groups derived from nationalist and military groups, such as the current

⁵¹Youcef Bouandel, "Political Parties and the Transition from Authoritarianism: The Case of Algeria," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003): 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3876187>

⁵²Hannah Brown, "Algeria's Forgotten Protesters," *Vox*, November 14, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/world/2019/11/14/20961104/algeria-protests>

version of the F.L.N., Algerians' motivations arguably have not changed: Algerians continue to desire their own state where their voices are heard through democracy, untainted by corruption.

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